

MAYOR'S OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE AFFAIRS (MOIRA)

900 BAGBY, CITY HALL ANNEX, # 011, HOUSTON, TX 77002

T: 713-437-6968 F: 713-247-2710 E-MAIL:

benito.juarez@cityofhouston.net

RECOMMENDATIONS

Originated from the Round Table Discussion with Mexican
Legislators: *Mexican Immigrants in Houston & Issues of Concern*
George R. Brown Convention Center
Friday, June 26, 2004

Sponsored by: *Catholic Charities, Camara de Empresarios Latinos de Houston (CHEL), Donatti Translation & Interpreting, Greater Houston Partnership, Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (HCC), International Protocol Alliance, Mir Fox, Rodriguez, P.C. Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs, Mayoral Advisory Committee on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (MACIRA)*

Members of the Mexican delegation who participated in the discussion

Rogelio Alejandro Flóres Mejía

Congressional representative for the state of Puebla

National Action Party (PAN)

Av. Congreso de la Unión N. 66
Col. El Parque; C.P. 15960 Mexico, D.F.
T: 01800-718-4291 ext. 7543, 7645
rogelio.flores@congreso.gob.mx

Lic. Mónica Valdez Murphree

Advisor

Commission of International Relations

Senate of the Republic of México

Torre Caballito

Paseo de la Reforma 10, Piso 14, Oficina 18
Col. Tabacalera 06030 México, D. F.
T: 5345-3000 ext. 3192/3864, F: 3864
01-800-501-0810
mvaldez.cre@senado.gob.mx

Lic. Edgar Oliva Mariñelarena

Technical Secretary of Border Issues Commission

Senate of the Republic of México

Commission of Border Affairs

Paseo de la Reforma#10

Edificio Torre del Caballito, piso 14, oficina 11
T: 01-800-714-1766, exts 3119 y 3853
asuntosfronterizos@yahoo.com.mx

The Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (MOIRA), at the request of leaders of the Mexican Immigrant community in Houston, organized the Round Table Discussion. The City of Houston is the fourth largest city in the United States and has the fourth largest Mexican Immigrant community. Mexican immigrants in Houston account for 27% of the total Latino/Hispanic population of Houston.

QT-P3. **Race and Hispanic or Latino: 2000** Data Set: [Census 2000 Summary File 1 \(SF 1\) 100-Percent Data](#) Geographic Area: **Houston city, Texas**

Subject	Number	Percent
RACE		
Total population	1,953,631	100.0
One race	1,892,153	96.9
White	962,610	49.3
Black or African American	494,496	25.3
American Indian and Alaska Native	8,568	0.4
American Indian	4,425	0.2
Alaska Native	32	0.0
Both American Indian and Alaska Native	0	0.0
American Indian or Alaska Native, not specified	4,111	0.2
HISPANIC OR LATINO		
Total population	1,953,631	100.0
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	730,865	37.4
Mexican	527,442	27.0
Puerto Rican	6,906	0.4
Cuban	4,970	0.3
Other Hispanic or Latino	191,547	9.8
Not Hispanic or Latino	1,222,766	62.6

(X) Not applicable.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1, Matrices P3, P4, PCT4, PCT5, PCT8, and PCT11.

Course of Events:

- Lorenzo Cano of the Mexican-American Studies Program of the University of Houston presented a slide show that walked attendees through the historical perspective of the Mexican-American & Mexican Immigrant communities in Houston.
- The Consulate of Mexico provided the participants at the round table discussion with an insight of the current needs of the Mexican Immigrant community in the city of Houston using the most current statistical data. (See attachment).
- The Mexican Legislation gave a presentation about the current issues affecting Mexico today, especially the upcoming Mexican elections in 2004 and the presidential elections in 2006
- About eighty participants had the opportunity to engage in an open discussion on issues of concern to Houston's Mexican immigrant community and review current topics in United States – Mexican relations affecting the course of immigration such Amnesty & Legalization, Border Issues, Education, Health Care, Guest Workers Visa, Security, and The U.S. Visit Program.

Consulate General of Mexico in Houston

The Mexican Community in Houston

Houston, TX, June 24, 2004

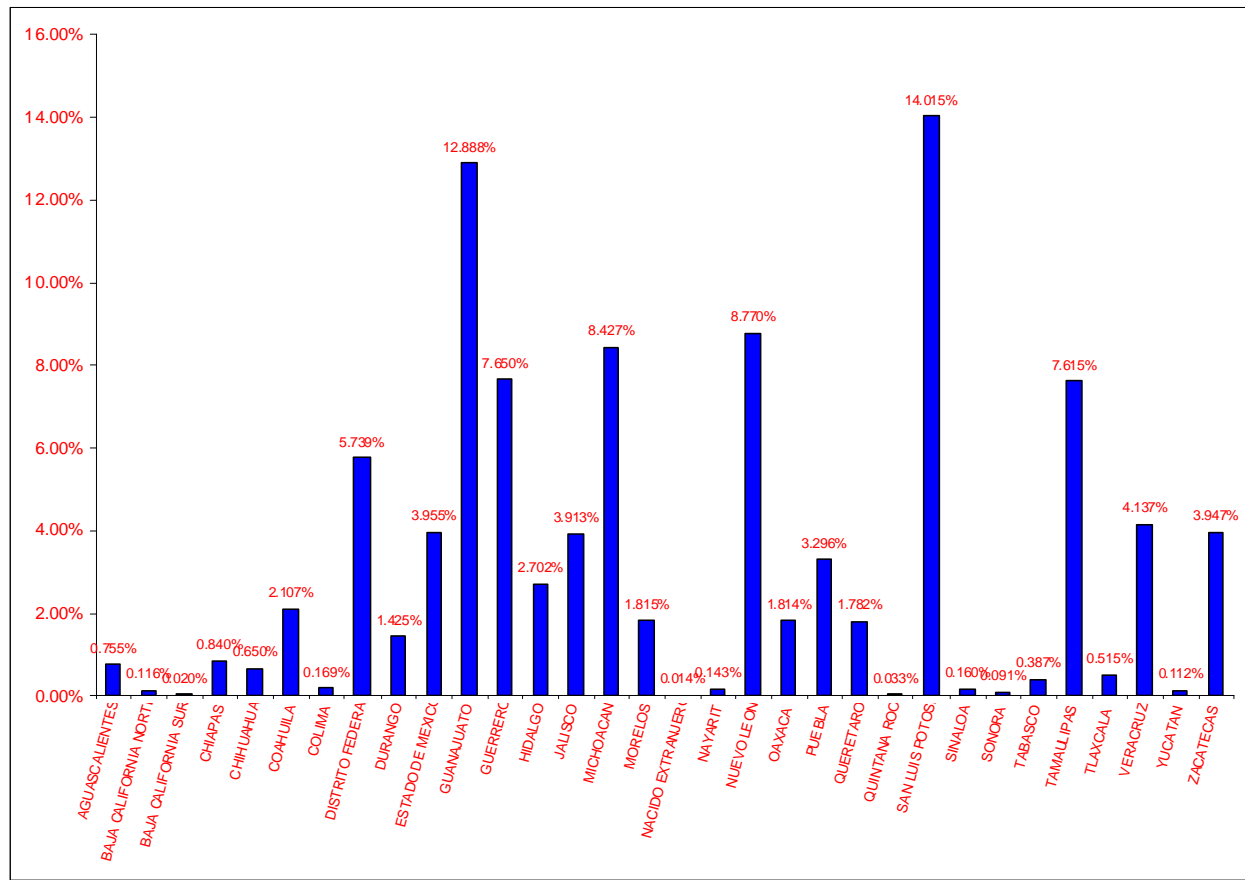
Issuance of selected documents

Document	Total June 18, 2004	Total 2003	Total 2002	Total 2001
Passports	9,628	19,937	18,049	17,382
Consular ID's	20,499	53,263	55,511	30,890
Visas	1,776	5,819	5,197	5,631
*Declaration of nationality	---	2,635	1,032	1,436
Powers of Attorney	484	980	698	623

• From January 1 to March 20, 2003 end of the Constitutional term to apply for the Dual Citizenship

Consular ID cards

(Matrícula Consular)

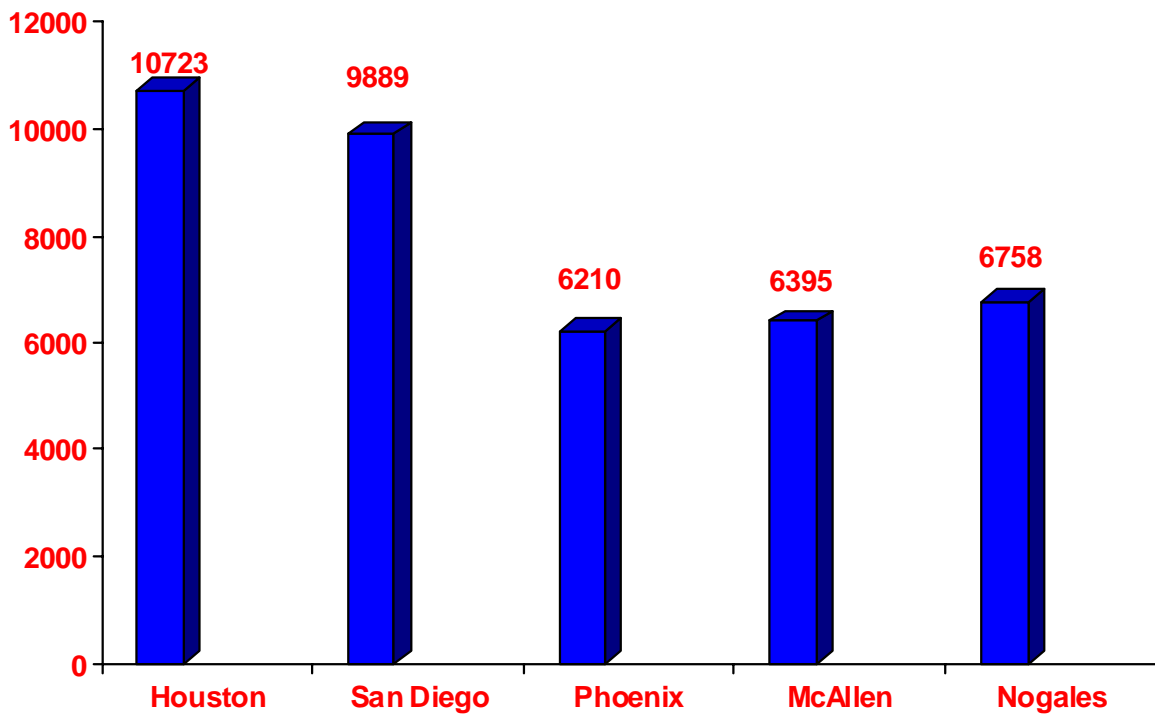


Protection of Mexican Nationals

Consulates of Mexico in the U.S.

Highest number in cases registered

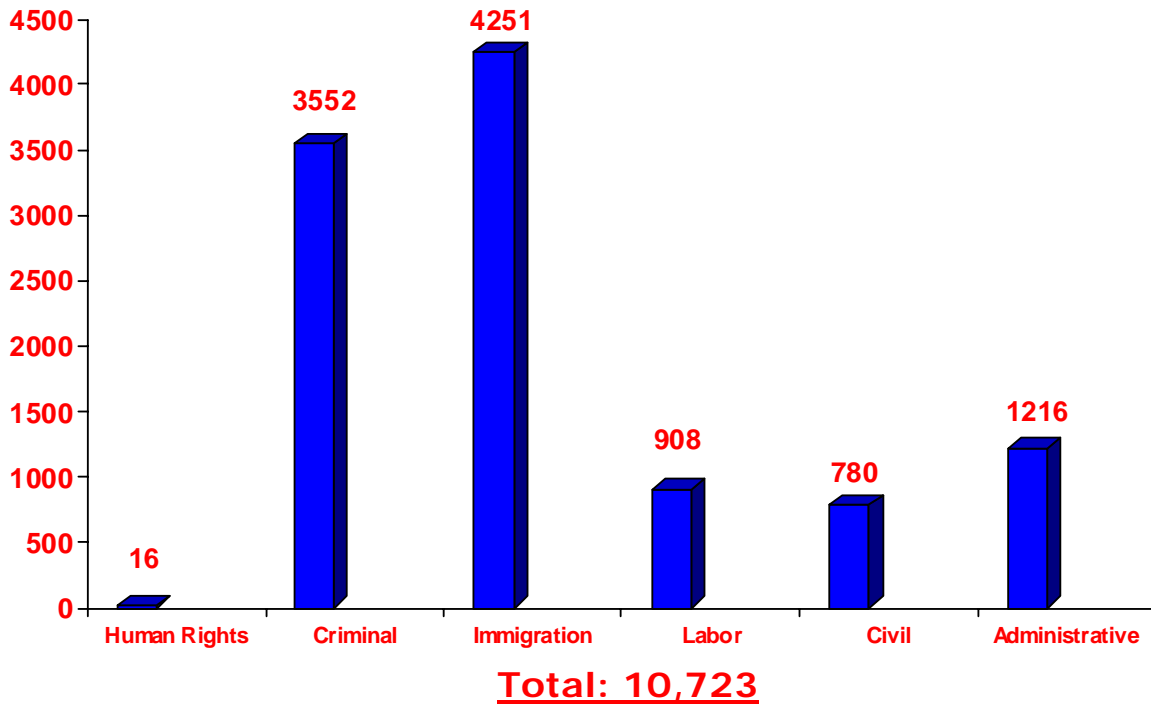
January 1, 2003-June 23, 2004



Consulate General of Mexico in Houston

Breakdown cases

January 1, 2003-June 23, 2004



SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ROUND TABLE ON AMNESTY/LEGALIZATION:

Moderator: Sam Dunning

Director, Office of Justice & Peace, Catholic Diocese of Galveston-Houston

T: 713-741-8731 **E-mail:** sdunning@diogh.org

Participants: Rodolfo Salazar, *DREAM Act Committee*; Marta Olvera, *Serafin Olvera Committee/Bryan Immigrant Committee*; Carmen Mandujano, *Office of Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee*; Bill Crow, *Office of Congressman John Culberson*; Andrew Harwick, *Social Security Administration*; Rosemary Vega, *YMCA International Services*; Scott Hochberg, *State Representative of Texas*; Sylvia Gonzalez, *League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)*; Dr. Antonio Gonzalez, *LULAC*

The discussion on Amnesty/Legalization considered:

- A constituency should consist not only of the “true believers” (i.e. immigrant groups such as MALDEF, LULAC, ARCA, and so forth) but should also include a more extensive membership of what we often called middle-class, middle of the road moderates because there are a large number of people “in the middle,” or undecided, over these issues
- We have not been very effective in describing the plight of the immigrant to skeptical, but otherwise well-meaning, persons in our various communities
- So often the stridency of the reform movement is off-putting to many
- We need to provide opportunities for the immigrant families to meet with others in a concerted, dedicated, and measured manner
- There is a need to bring more public officials into contact with the real, day-by-day, lived experience of the immigrant
- Forums need to be held where mid-level government offices from, say México, could dialogue on a regular basis with counterparts in the United States.

Recommendations:

- 1. Create a broad-based, grassroots level constituency*
- 2. Share the immigrant story*
- 3. Find ways of dialoguing with public officials both in the United States and in Mexico to understand each other's domestic political climate and difficulties.*

ROUND TABLE ON BORDER ISSUES:

Moderator: Maria Jimenez

Board Member, National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

T: 713-926-1885 **E-mail:** dignidadya@yahoo.com

Participants: Jorge Colorado, *Latino Learning Center/Houston Small business Development*; Barbara Owlett, *YMCA International Services*; Jenny Cross-Gonzalez, *Catholic Charities*; Linda Pilling, *Center for the Healing of Racism*

The discussion on US/Mexico border considered:

- The differences in policy approaches between US/Mexico and US/Canada and the different countries in the Caribbean
- The link between immigration policies that permit legal entry and those that necessitate enforcing immigration laws at the border
- The infrastructure that either eases or creates obstacles to border crossings
- The complexity of defining the agencies that are involved in border law enforcement since the organization of DHS
- The impact of mistreatment and misconduct of border agents
- The conditions that create the clandestine movement of people due to increasing difficulties in crossing legally
- The need to explore forms of ensuring an orderly flow of persons across borders and border-entries while at the same time, guaranteeing safety, security and the protection of human rights and dignity.

Recommendation:

1. *Border policies need to be further explored to assess their viability in reflecting the growing economic integration of Mexico and the United States, particularly with respect to the movement of people.*

ROUND TABLE ON EDUCATION

Moderator: Jennifer Alexander

Manager, Multilingual Department, Houston Independent School District

T: 713-892-6500 **E-mail:** jalexan3@houstonisd.org

Participants: David Mendoza, *City of Houston*; Leticia Martinez, *DREAM Act*; Ismael Martinez, *DREAM Act*; Bridget Canty, *Office of International Admissions at the University of Houston*; Diane Dale, *Work Life Institute*; Elizabeth Burleigh, *Work Life Institute*; Raul Ruiz, *College of Biblical Studies*; Ruah Ruiz, *College of Biblical Studies*; Desiree Ruiz, *Bear Creek Assistance Ministries*; Mary Hallinan, *DeVry University*

The discussion on Education considered:

- Mexican immigrant students should be able to read about the history of Mexico—especially an important speech from some of the great orators of Mexico
- It is important for Mexican children to learn about their history and culture
- Informing students regarding hazardous working conditions and how to stay safe at work.

Recommendations:

1. *Teach the value of the of the students' heritage, and history in regular school settings*
2. *Expose children to the law-making process of the United States such as organizing field trips for students to visit the capitol.*
3. *Contact the appropriate HISD personnel to help them provide Health and Safety trainings for students, especially those about to graduate from High School.*

ROUND TABLE ON GUEST WORKERS' VISA

Moderator: Adan G. Vega

Vice-President, Cámara de Empresarios de Latinos

T: 713-527-9606 **E-mail:** vega@nol.net

Participants: Elise Wilkinson, *American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)*; Pam Powers, *Office of Congressman John Culberson*; Charles Foster, *Law Offices of Tindall & Foster*; Cari Broderson, *Greater Houston Partnership*; Monique Trigo, *Estrenado Casa*; Max Camo, *Morgan Stanley*

The discussion on Guest Workers' Visa considered:

- President Bush's Temporary Worker's Visa plan
- The plan is vague and contains provisions that are not attractive for the applicants (i.e. must leave the U. S. after three (3) years).
- Major adjustments are required in order to consider this plan as viable.
- Current H-2B provisions need small modifications in order to be used as a "guest worker" program.

Recommendations:

1. *Revise current legislation*
2. *Adjust existing standards for H-2B applicants*
3. *Eliminate the restrictive language such as "seasonal, intermittent, and peak load"*
4. *Base the H-2B process on the need of the employer and the willingness of the workforce.*

ROUND TABLE ON HEALTH

Moderator: Ana Malinow

Co-founder & Chair, Health Care for All Texas, M.D./Baylor College of Medicine

T: 713-873-2597 **E-mail:** Ana_Malinow@hchd.tmc.edu

Participants: Francisco Sanchez, *Office of Harris County Judge Robert Eckels*; Elena Gonzalez, *LBJ Hospital Social Work*; Shannon Hilburn, *Primeway Federal Credit Union*; Rebecca Reyna, *Office of Council Member Adrian Garcia*; Jane Scott

The discussion on Heath care considered:

- In Mexico there are community health centers for all Mexicans, which are free, and tax-financed
- Wondered if perhaps we should have something similar to the community health care centers in Mexico here in the US.
- The costs of health care in the US, and the high percentage of uninsured Hispanics and immigrants in Texas
- Before the creation of these new health centers, we need to decide on the tenets of a universal health care system.

Recommendations:

- 1. Create a different kind of health care system to the one we have in place today*
- 2. Gather a community of stakeholders to discuss ways in which a consensus for universal health care can be built*
- 3. Bring about universal health care.*

ROUND TABLE ON SECURITY

Moderator: Joe Rubio

Vice-President, Catholic Charities Advocacy & Parish Relations

T: 713-874-6672 **E-mail:** jrubio@catholiccharities.org

Participants: Jane Crow, *Representative of Office of Congressman John Culberson*; Lt. Humberto Lopez, *Houston Police Department, Latino Squad*; Lynette Rambo, *Texas Credit Union*; Dr. Juan Hernandez, *Texas Credit Union*; Wafa Adbin, *Cabrini Center for Immigrant Legal Assistance/Catholic Charities*; Mark Hernandez, *U.S Department of Labor / OSHA*

The discussion on Security considered:

- Immigration issues between the two nations should be founded on mutual interests among two friendly nations
- Communication is essential in a security conscious world, but there is little information about what Mexico is undertaking to prevent terrorism
- Houston Police Department reports that over half of all burglary victims in Houston are Mexican immigrants who carry large amounts of cash on their persons and who are afraid to report theft due to their undocumented status
- Banks and credit unions can routinely provide security through savings accounts. They can also remit money to workers' relatives back home at reasonable rates. For example, the Credit Union movements of both nations have linked to provide remittances at about \$10 per \$100
- In the area of personal security the industrial mortality rate among Mexican immigrant laborers is the highest of any nationality group, according to OSHA.

Recommendations:

1. *Dialogue about immigration issues between the two nations should be done under certain principles*
2. *Be aware of the impact of the measures to be undertaken*
3. *With the help of banking institutions, facilitate the opening of bank accounts for Mexican immigrants and the transfer of money between the two countries*
4. *Teach essential on-the-job safety skills to immigrant workers.*

ROUND TABLE ON THE US-VISIT PROGRAM

Moderator: Bryan Hykes

Coordinator of International Business, World Trade Division Greater Houston Partnership

T: 713-844-0236 or E-mail: bhykes@houston.org

Participants*: Rodolfo Cruz, *Hispanic Entrepreneurship, University of Houston*; Leonel Castillo, *Mayor's Office Education Liaison*; Lizbeth Mejia, *Mayor's Office Education Liaison*

*Note: more people took part in this discussion as those who arrived late sat at this table.

Regretfully, we were unable to take down their names and affiliations

The discussion on the US-Visit Program considered:

- The impact of the full implementation of the US-Visit Program
- Mexican nationals account between 30 and 40 percent of annual retail sales for venues in San Marcos and San Antonio alone
- 40 % of the \$550 million credit card purchases spent by Mexicans in the U.S. took place in Texas with 4 percent of that national total being spent in Houston
- Tourism “has more of an impact on the city’s economy than most people realize… with 23.1 million people visiting Houston in 2002 having spent approximately \$9.6 billion.

Recommendations:

1. *Undertaking a thorough risk assessment and economic impact study of the fully implemented US-VISIT program on Houston.*
2. *Increasing engagement by public officials in charge of overseeing US-VISIT with the local business community (via town hall meetings, press conferences, etc…)*
3. *Creating a public awareness campaign with both Mexican nationals, and the Houston business community of the US-VISIT program (via public officials in charge).*

Background of US-VISIT program

The full implementation of the US-VISIT program is currently scheduled to take full effect by the end of this year – it could also potentially have very serious and adverse economic consequences for Houston’s business and tourist community, which relies heavily on its international residents and businesses. Currently, there are approximately 6.5 million Mexican nationals who have been issued an identification card called a “laser visa” by the State Department, which replaced the Border Crossing Card in 2001ⁱ shortly after 9/11 and is required to enter into the United States. The strict requirements to obtain a laser visa includes a personal interview at a U.S. consulate, no criminal record, an extensive background investigation, proof of family ties, and posting a \$100 fee. The US-VISIT program, crafted out of the Pentagon shortly after the 2001 terrorist attacks, not only requires the laser visa for entry into the U.S. but also calls for fingerprinting and photographing every “foreign visitor”ⁱⁱ entering the U.S. and features strict enforcement of a maximum 72 hour stay, travel limit within 25 miles of the U.S. border, and, for the first time ever, provision for departure information (“checking-out”). Mexican nationals holding laser visas who do not have an I-94 visa (required for travel longer than 72 hours) and who do not check out on time – within 72 hours – would violate their visas and possibly be barred from returning to the U.S. for a period of three years. (Canadians can travel freely within the U.S. for up to 6 months using just a valid Drivers License).

An immediate and accurate impact of the effect of the US-VISIT program in Houston is hard to predict but it has been pointed out by critics that any delay in the border will simply discourage Mexican shoppers and businessmen from coming over to the big cities to shop. Actually, a number of figures have surfaced about the impact of Mexican nationals in other Texas cities. It is estimated that Mexican nationals account between 30 and 40 percent of annual retail sales for venues in San Marcos and San Antonio alone. Another study conducted by the State of Texas in 2003 on credit card spending by Mexican nationals found that 40 percent of the \$550 million spent by Mexicans in the U.S. took place in Texas with 4 percent of that national total being spent in Houston (or approximately \$20 million). However, because Mexico is a cash society, no retailer knows exactly how much of total retail sale receipts are due to Mexican shoppers. This is could be alarming. The economic impact could cross into many sectors: from the medical centers to the service and retail industry to higher-education institutions. According to the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau, tourism “has more of an impact on the city’s economy than most people realize... with 23.1 million people visiting Houston in 2002 having spent approximately \$9.6 billion on accommodations, restaurants, recreation and

retail, as well as variety of other services.”ⁱⁱⁱ That translates into per capita spending of \$415 in Houston during 2002. Assuming the same spending habits, a mere 5 percent drop in the number of visitors, from 23.1 million to 21.9 million, would also mean a net loss of nearly \$500 (\$493) million dollars for Houston businesses.

ⁱ The “laser visa” is still nevertheless commonly referred to as a “BCC” (Border Crossing Card)

ⁱⁱ Applies to all foreigners except Canadians, certain diplomats, children under 14, and adults over 79.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tourism translates into dollars in Houston. Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau, May 6, 2004.

FACTS ABOUT THE US-MEXICO BORDER:

- Six Mexican States make up the length of 3,152 kilometers of the border with the United States
- The México-US border has 40% of the territorial land of México
- The Mexico-US border has 28% of the coastal lands
- The Mexico-US border has two of the biggest river ways in the country: The Colorado River and the Rio Bravo
- The Mexico-US border has 16.6 million inhabitants, or 17% of the total population of Mexico
- The México-US border total population increased 25% faster than the average in the rest of the Country
- 82% of the population at the México-US border is situated in then municipalities
- The six border states generated 23.5% of the Internal Gross Product in 2000
- The Internal Gross Product from 1993-2000 increased 40%, while the rest of the country increased 28%
- The Border States received 29% of the investment of foreing capital
- The population that is dependent (less than 15 years, and more than 65 years) is 35.8% in the border states, compared with 38.3% in the rest of the country
- 36.9% of the population of border states is employed, compared to 34.6% for the rest of the country
- 59% of the populations of border states has two jobs earning minimun wage, compared to 43% in the rest of the country
- The per capita internal gross product was superior by 40%, compared to the national average in 2000
- 10% of the households concentrated 48.77% of the total earnings for the population of the border states
- The region capture 53% of the tourism industry (1994-2000) with \$2,277 million in 2000 alone

Source: INEGI & Comisión for Border Issues of the Presidentcy of the Republic of México

In Closing

The framework of the discussion did not intended to find a magical solution to the issues above described. Rather, it was an attempt to start a positive dialogue among those concerned about the current debate over immigration reform and to address the obstacles to building more cohesive information networks in the immigration field across the borders. We encourage those that participated in the discussion to advance the content, accessibility, and reach of information resources, and to motivate and improve how this information is used and shared by policy makers, service providers, and the immigrant population directly impacted by the issues addressed at the round table.

We would like to thank the following individuals for their invaluable contribution to make this a succesful event.

*Ana Malinow
Adan Vega
Bryan Hikes
Benito Juarez
Council Member Adrián García
Charles Martin Borromeo
Cari Broderson
Joe Rubio
Jennifer Alexander
Lucy Gonzalez
Maria Jimenez
Melissa Arong
Patricia Anne Borromeo
Richard Cantú
Sam Dunning
Velma Laws*